

VOTE - Voter Outreach Through Education Washington Secretary of State

UNITED STATES AND WORLD CURRICULUM GRADES 8-12

TEACHER: LESSON 9

THEME: GOTV (GET OUT THE VOTE)

Two noteworthy and outspoken visionaries in our nation's history spoke about the struggle for equal rights, including voting, and the hard fact that those who wanted that right would have to demand and work for it.

"If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate (disapprove of) agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will."
(Frederick Douglass, former slave turned abolitionist leader)

"In the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited powers into the hands of husbands. Remember all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention are not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion and will not hold ourselves bound to obey any laws in which we have no voice or representation."
(Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams, leader in the movement to gain independence from England)

The women's movement in the 19th and 20th centuries effectively used both campaign posters and songs to convey its message that women demand and deserve full suffrage. This 1893 pro-suffrage poster that is shown with suffrage leader Frances Willard in the middle is entitled "The American Women and Her Political Peers." The poster protested that women had the same political rights as others who at that time were legally denied the vote, namely those institutionalized for mental & criminal reasons and Native Americans.

Women also used marches, lobbying, slogans, humorous speeches and songs, songs like "She's good enough to be your mother, so she's good enough to vote with you."

In similar fashion, the 1960s saw a movement to secure the vote by and for those over 18 years old. At that time, the voting age was 21 but the age for being drafted into military service was 18. A very powerful catch phrase was made into a campaign theme: "If I'm old enough to die for my country, I should be allowed to vote in it."

Those groups cited above have won the vote. Today, the challenge is not to extend suffrage to disenfranchised groups but rather to mobilize the suffrage potential they have, particularly new voters in the age range of 18-to-24 year olds.

This activity is designed to meld the powerfully creative techniques of the past with the urgency of today. It calls for students to model their pro-suffrage ancestors in a campaign to mobilize young voters to act on rights that were secured for them. It can also engender some prior thinking on their part about the level of commitment to the awesome right and responsibility of voting that will befall them when they reach the age of majority.

ACTIVITY:

Ask students to imagine that they are employed by the advertising firm of Douglass, King, Adams and Paul (Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King, Abigail Adams and Alice Paul, all suffrage advocates in our history.) The firm has been hired by the Secretary of State's office to increase voter participation by young adults, with a target group of 18-to-24 years old. As with any large advertising firm, the campaign is assigned to teams, each tasked to create a plan and then to present it to a meeting of all teams and the director. They will then choose which campaign to use.



Students are to design an advertising campaign using a song, a catch phrase, a poster, a commercial (for radio or television), a short play (or video), a humorous speech, a PowerPoint presentation, poem, or combination of these. They must also type a one page defense of their message and approach which explains why they chose that message and medium and why it is likely to increase voting by the target group.

Each campaign must be no longer than five minutes. The final product by each team, including written defense, will be presented to the other teams (classmates) and a vote will decide which campaign the firm has chosen.

Make enough copies of Lesson Nine for each student.

This lesson will require some planning and creative time for students. This can be done at home or in class, probably requiring both. Time in class for brainstorming of ideas will no doubt be creatively noisy, but the creative juices will be flowing. The finished product will have to be completed at home since it requires rehearsal and a formal written proposal. It is suggested that design teams be allotted three students as the optimum size group for maximum involvement by each student.

Since the class will vote on which campaign to endorse, you may wish to have a prize ready for the winning team.